

The Servant of the Lord

'Who is the servant of the Lord?' This was the question that Ethiopian, eunuch asked the evangelist Philip in Acts 8:34 'Tell me, please, *who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?*' The title 'servant of the Lord' is one of great dignity, set aside for leaders such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David and Isaiah were called God's "servants" as they obediently walked with the Lord. There are several references to "my servants the prophets", sent by God to call Israel to repentance and renewal of the covenant. God's servants were those who worshiped him and carried out his will, often in important leadership roles. At times it seems quite clear that servant refers collectively to the nation of Israel. *'You are My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.* (Isa 49:3;41:8-9) Sometimes the concept of the "servant" refer to those in Israel who were spiritual, the righteous remnant who remained faithful to the Lord. The servant functions as a covenant for the people and is involved in the restoration, where the servant brings Israel back to the Lord. Originally, God intended that all humankind should be his servant. Then, after the fall of man, God chose the nation of Israel to serve him. Since the nation often proved to be unresponsive to the word of the Lord, He needed to send truer messenger. Isa 42:21;53:7 refers to Jesus Christ, blind and deaf in refer to His endurance of suffering and reproach on the cross. 1 Peter 2:16 describes "servants of God" *Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as bond-servants of God.*

The New Testament relates the ministry of the servant to the first coming of Christ and his atoning death. He Who is that amazing prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13 thru 53:12. Jesus' entire life was centered on serving God—by teaching, healing, and proclaiming the Kingdom. (Mat.4:23) He came not "to be served but to serve" (Mat20:28) Then, on the last supper, Jesus washed the disciples' feet, leaving them with a final teaching to serve one another: *"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you"* (JOH13:12-17) So, if Jesus is all about serving, and God wants to make us like Him, that we should be all about serving as well. It's always been God's intention to make us like His Son, Jesus (Rom8:29) Countless saints found him all that Isaiah said the servant would be in connection with his mission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, became a light for the Gentiles. (Isa 49:6) the good news about Jesus, the lamb of God who was slain. As the perfect sacrifice for sin was in accord with God's will and resulted ultimately in victory and exaltation. The one who died now lives to intercede on behalf of believers in heaven. Come, peace with God, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. May God in his marvelous grace enable you to come and rest in the blood that the suffering servant shed for sinners. Jesus has two natures, both divine and human (God's nature dwells in Christ (COL2:9) was born under the Law (GAL4:4) As such under the Law, He came to serve those who are lost by dying and being example for them. As we see in the word of God the image of Christ as a servant, we see one who gave himself. He gave up the glories of heaven in exchange for walking among sinful men on earth and dying on the cross for us. He demonstrated what it means to serve by washing the feet of his disciples. O to be like thee! Blessed Redeemer. The fact that we should serve God is obvious in Scripture. *"It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'* (LUK 4:8)

Many Christian leaders frustrated or impatient, struggle with and in their role as leaders. They cry out to God in prayer asking Him for a supernatural endowment of leadership ability, as though leadership was a gift of the Holy Spirit. As in everything, Jesus is our example for which we are to pattern our lives after. If we'll follow in His steps, we too can fulfill God's vision, plan for our lives and ministries. Christian leaders will need to adopt servant leadership style, modeled on that demonstrated by Jesus throughout His ministry. All Christians, are called to be servants, serving each other, accountable to each other, loving one another and following Jesus' example. But certain men will function as leaders among leaders because of their giftedness, wisdom, calling and election. *Obey your leaders and submit to them.* (Heb13:17)

The focus of servant leadership within the church is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (EPH4:12) This means, Christ being the head of the church, the entire church body is served. We all mutually submit ourselves to Jesus just as He was in submission to the Father. Servant leadership frees the church of the abuse of power, promotes mutual respect and love for one another. Where do we get the idea of a "clergy" "layman"! Division of authority with classic ranks, effect in legalistic tradition. In God's eyes there are no layman, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ with different gifts and ministries in God's service. The servant's purpose for living is to please God.

All followers of Jesus are built, gifted, grace. Every servant of Christ receives the Holy Spirit, but receive differing amounts of spiritual understanding from God. God's servants differ in consecration; He accordingly bestows His gifts to each as He pleases. Lord knew the trading ability of his chosen servants. When you discover the talents and spiritual gifts for His service and you use them to glorify Him, that we can find our unique calling in life! *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms*" (1PE4:10; ROM 12:3-8; ICO12:4-30)

Bible offers several motivations to serve the Lord. Our service is rooted in love and God sees, rewards our labor of love. (Heb.6:10) We want to serve God because "we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Heb.12:28) Our service supplies "the needs of the Lord's people" (2Co.9:12) Our service proves our faith and causes others to praise God. (v.13) The reason we can love and serve God is that He first loved and served us. Love of Christ for us should motivate us to serve for Him. Paul became aware of the love and grace given him; his response was to serve God. The Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill God's calling for our lives on a daily basis. *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* (Joshua 24:15)

Are you a follower of Jesus? When that question is asked, people generally give a wide variety of answers. They may think it's like with believing in God, attending church, participating in communion, giving tithes, praying in need, living a good life, or being religious. But none of these actually prove that someone is following Jesus. Engaging in certain religious activities is not equivalent to following Jesus. To determine if we are truly following Jesus, we must use biblical guidelines. As Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, He called Simon Peter and Andrew to leave their occupation as fishermen and follow Him. (Mat. 4:18-20) Their response demonstrates what following Jesus involves: *"Immediately they left their nets and followed Him"*. This was a whole life commitment, not merely religious activity. In order to evaluate whether we too are following Jesus, we must understand what experiences are true of those who are genuine followers.

Born Again: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3) This is the first qualification to become a follower of Jesus. We must confess and repent of our sins, by faith receive God's forgiveness, surrender our lives to Christ as our Savior and Lord, and start walking in His ways. Being a Christian is an entirely new life born of the Spirit. **Prayer:** *"He spent the whole night in prayer to God"* (Luke 6:12) If we follow Jesus, we will be a person of prayer just as He was. In fact, it will be a major part of our lives, we must make it a daily habit to have a quiet time alone with God. Starting and finishing each day in prayer is a good way to make sure we are walking in Christ's footsteps. **Listening:** *"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"* (Mat. 17:5) Too often many of us begin the morning with thoughts of everything we need to accomplish that day. It's more essential to spend time listening to God the Father, asking Him to guide us into His plan for our lives as well as for the day ahead. God requires our submission and obedience to His will. We must take time to listen to Him as we read His Word and meditate. **Faith:** *"that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16) As we trusted Christ for salvation, so we must continue to live by faith as we follow Him. We'll trust Him with our difficulties, pain, temptations, and needs, relying on Him to enable us to do whatever He says. **Obedience:** *"I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life"* (John 8:12). Following requires obedience, and we recognize how foolish it is to go our own way. It is always good to obey Him because He is the source of everything good.

Love: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and will all your strength"* (Mark 12:30). We can't follow Christ with a divided heart—half in the world and half with God. We can't allow impure thoughts, images, words into our minds and claim to love Him at the same time. Wholehearted love for Christ affects what we think and watch, what we do, and where we go. **Sharing:** *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations"* (Mat. 28:19) This is Jesus' command, and if we are going to follow Him, we will share the truth of God's Word with others. In a world of hatred, bitterness, death, Christ's followers are to bring the gospel to people throughout the world. **Serve:** *"If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also"* (John 12:26). Jesus came as a servant, and as His followers, we should do as well. All of us have the capacity to serve the Lord in some fashion by serving others. Service comes in many different forms: helping, caring, encouraging, comforting, giving, teaching, or sharing God's Word. **Suffering:** *"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake"* (Phi. 1:29) Suffering in some form is always going to be a part of being a follower of Christ. If we are following Jesus, we can expect to experience some form of suffering. We may be rejected because we make people feel uncomfortable and don't fit in with those who love the world. But this should not stop us from following Jesus and sharing the gospel. Our hardship is a way of identifying with His suffering. Often our suffering comes from within as we battle to our own will and surrender to Christ's lordship. In whatever form suffering comes, we should embrace it as badge of honor and privilege that we have, *"been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name of Jesus."* (ACT 5:41) All these qualities we want to pursue and these practices are essential elements of our walk with Jesus and should become an important part of our lives as we follow Him. Ask God to work these into your life so you can follow Jesus more fully.

There are many names the New Testament uses to address followers of Jesus as Christians, but one of primary words is servant or bondservant. Unfortunately, many are instead of serving God, they fight for highest position or impressive title. But Jesus taught, modeled something differently. *Let this mind (attitude) be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.* (PHI 2:3-11) Christ never sought earthly power, position, prestige, possession. Jesus came into this world as a servant and remained committed to offer Himself as a servant. If we are to fulfill God's purpose and plan for our life, we must develop the spirit of a servant in humility.

Mary was the mother of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. She was a willing, humble servant, trusting in God and obeying His call. The angel told Mary that she was highly favored by God, meant that Mary had been given much grace or "unmerited favor" from God. When the angel appeared and told her the baby would be God's Son, Mary replied, *"I am the Lord's servant! Let it be to me according to your word."* (LUK 1:38,28) Mary was willing to submit her life to God's plan. She knew that her life would hold many sacrifices as the mother of the Messiah. Being chosen by God for a high calling requires total commitment and a willingness to sacrifice everything out of love and devotion to one's Savior.

“present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”(ROM12:1) Before we were saved, we walked in our own way, made our own decisions, and chose our own direction. When we were saved, we are sanctified, we were born again with the life of God. Sanctification means to be "separate" or to be "set apart." When a person is sanctified, he or she is being set apart by God for a specific divine purpose. After we're regenerated, the next step is to consecrate, give ourselves to the Lord. Consecration means to be "devote and dedicate for use by the Lord." It is the act of setting apart anything or person to the worship or service of God. God wants us to walk in His way, follow Him, be led by Him. We cannot reach spiritual maturity without consecrating ourselves to the Lord because consecration is the basis for spiritual experience, so that we may live holy lives to which we have been chosen and called. God has a plan for each one of us, entrusting us with a mission. Sanctification relates to a sovereign act of God. *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations"*(JER1:4) Are you set apart for God? Now God asks us to consecrate ourselves to Him. Consecration is giving of my life to God to do His will. It means that I present my body to Him as a living sacrifice. Lord wants us to consecrate the new life He has given us to Him. In Old Testament when a lamb was offered as a sin offering, it was a type of Lord Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. But there was another sacrifice was called burnt offering. It represented the Lord Jesus offering up His life to the Father to do His will. This sacrifice was precious to God. *"If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord...he shall offer it of his own voluntary will"*(LEV1:2-3) Consecration is *"unto the Lord"* and that it must be voluntary. It is a picture of our *living sacrifice* to the Lord.(LEV1:1-17)The entire animal(representing believer) was placed on the altar. The fire under this offering was kept burning continually-day and night. It is an offering of entire surrender, dedication to God. For every Christian is now a priest to God.(1PE2:9) In order to focus on Jesus Christ, it is important to understand who we are in Christ and who He is in us so that we can walk in the purpose to which we have been called and set apart. For it's only in Him that we are holy and acceptable to God. We can now offer ourselves to God because Jesus has set us free through His work on the Cross and has made us no longer slaves to Satan and our old sinful nature.(ROM8:2;6:13) He has delivered us from the power of sin, flesh, world, and Satan. All of these wonderful things are "the mercies of God". The ceremony of the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood is a picture for us of presenting of our lives to the Lord.(LEV8:18-28) Three parts of Aaron's body were touched by the blood of sacrifice. They represent consecration of our total being: The Ear: hearkening to word of the Lord, The Thumb: doing will of the Lord, The Toe: walking in His paths. Our part is "Consecration", the surrendering of our new lives totally to the Lord. To consecrate yourself is to answer God's call. This means making a conscious, willing decision to dedicate your soul, mind, heart, and body to God. God wants me to give my life to Him, not because I have to but because I love Him and want to serve Him. Consecration is a definite act of our will before God. I must make the decision. God will never edge of human responsibility or our will. Consecration is abdicating rulership of our lives in favor of the King, our Lord Jesus Christ. The 'I' yields to the authority of Christ as Master. It is the giving of our whole being to God. *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*(PH1:21) Once the initial act of consecration is made to the Lord, it is followed by a continual attitude in our daily lives. The burnt offering was offered to God each morning and each evening, day by day, continually. Paul said, "I die every day"(1CO15:31) he meant that he laid his life on the line each and every day.(2CO11:23-28) I must live out my consecration continually, I offer myself to the Lord to do His will. *and take up his cross daily,*"(LUK9:2) We consecrate ourself to the Lord because we belong Him. *"do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit...and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price"*(1CO6:19-20) The price Lord Jesus paid for us by His own blood! *"you were not redeemed with corruptible things,.. But with the precious blood of Christ"*(1PE1:18-19) To redeem means: to purchase something that has been lost; to set free, to liberate, as setting a slave free from slavery, to deliver from danger. When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He redeemed us by the shedding of His blood. "Lord Jesus, You have redeemed me. You have given me opportunity and right to come before You and to serve You." Consecration is simply recognizing Christ's ownership of us. When I consecrate myself to the Lord, God is the One who decides what He wants me to do and where to serve Him. And believe whatever He chooses for me is sure to be very best for me. Consecration is the offering of a whole life to God. In OT, once an animal was placed on the altar as a burnt offering to God, it was not taken down again. It was holy unto God. *"every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord."*(LEV27:28) Once dedicated our life to God, we cannot take it back again. It belonged to God for His use. God expects our dedication to be a once-for-all giving of myself to Him as a living sacrifice, "Lord Jesus, I am for You. I'm no longer for myself, the world, or anything else. I am for Your use and Your satisfaction" The motive for Consecration, it is the love of Christ. *The love of Christ compels us.*(2CO5:14) meaning it constrains us, drives us, motivates us and guides us. Purpose of consecration is that God's will may be done in my life. *make you perfect in every good work to do His will,*(HEB3:20-21) The result of consecration is that I die to my own plans and ambitions; I live to do will of God. The blessing of Consecration is in finding God's perfect will for my life. When I consecrate my life to the Lord, He can show me that work which He has for me. My satisfaction comes when I find God's will for my life. May we all seek to be dedicated to the will of God, preserving in holiness by constant sanctification the gift given to us.

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,(GAL1:15-16) It is important that a servant of God know that he or she is called of God and to make that calling certain. *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;*(2PE1:10) Lord Jesus is the perfect model of Servant, High Priest and Minister of the sanctuary.(HEB8:2) Let us follow the perfect example set for us by our Lord. Jesus loved the church and gave himself for her. His servants must also love the church more than their own lives, give themselves for it. Christ had to lay down His life as a sacrifice. Message of the cross speaks of dying to self in order to live unto God and do His perfect will. Jesus explained *"Whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, sister, and mother.*(Mat.12:47-50) that his disciples were like spiritual brothers, sisters, mothers to Him. He desired to establish spiritual fellowship for His disciples with Himself and with one another.(1Tim5:1-3;3:15;Joh.19:25) Standing by the cross of, Jesus said to his mother, "Woman, behold your Son" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother" And from that hour the disciple took her into his (faith)home as in God's spiritual family. Lord Jesus said that those would be His disciples must forsake their all and follow Him *"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. "No one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions"*(Luk14:26-33) Christ calls His followers to turn from sin and the pursuit of the things of this world. There has always been that little flock of His disciples who have heard these words have literally forsaken their all to follow Him. Peter was looking for some assurance concerning his commitment to Christ. The disciples had heard Jesus tell the rich young man to sell everything, give the money to poor and follow Him and he would have treasures in heaven. But he turned his back on the Lord and walked away sorrowful. Jesus comment on how hard it is for the rich to be saved, Peter was wondering, See, we have left all and followed You "What do we get for following Christ? Jesus said to them, 'one who has left home for the sake of the kingdom of God that is, for Christ's sake, and his Gospel will receive many times as much in this age and in the age to come, eternal life. Jesus promised a hundredfold return on our giving and who make sacrifices for those become new spiritual family members in Christ. His promise of a hundredfold house and land refer to such facilities as are needed for the work of the Church.

The book of acts records how after the day of Pentecost a large number of disciples sold their lands and their house to follow the Lord and how they were joined together as one family in sharing all things in common with singleness of heart, which was a pattern for early church. Many disciples left their own families, homes to serve the Lord and how they lives in and shared all things in common.(Act4:32) Many followers left their countries to serve as missionaries in foreign lands and many died as martyrs. They consecrated themselves fully to Christ to serve Him all the days of their lives. Lord commands his disciples to hate their own family is that our flesh and blood relationship.(friends will generally counsel us contrary to the leading of the Holy Spirit) Jesus tells his disciples to count the cost of their calling and pay the price by forsaking their all and laying down their lives for the works of Lord. Like a man who wishes to build a tower or a king going out to fight a battle they must frankly assess the cost of following Jesus, those who believe this is God's call on your life. Follow Me, means there is path, there is suffering, there is loveliness, there is Jesus, there is New Jerusalem. Christ is worth following! When we follow Him in the way, we can be assured of following Him all the way to heaven.

When Lord called Paul to serve Him, he responded immediately, *I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.*(Acts 26:15-19) Disciples heard the words of Jesus and believed and obeyed. When the disciples were called by Christ to follow Him, were fisherman, tax collectors or workmen, they left everything behind immediately, left their jobs, home and followed Jesus. The reality that our possessions can make it impossible to follow Jesus. The success of the ministry lies in forsaking anything that hinder the kind of ministry which God wants to do. There are ministries of a higher order, were ministers of God are called to devote all their time and service to shoulder heavy spiritual responsibilities of the church. They are called with a high calling to forsake all and to serve Lord. If you are called for consecrated ministry, he will give you all the grace, strength and victory. Forsake all has consecrated himself to serve the Lord; become bondservant of the Lord. The full revelation of Christ is to be revealing through those who are bondservant to God. Forsake all is to lead the servants of Lord to the experience of being with Him, so that they may become living example or pattern of Christ.

Paul says *nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus.*(ACT20:24) Paul is describing his past. "My entire life before Christ—all of it. *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ."*(Phi3:7-8) He compared his efforts before he came to Christ with his inheritance gained after he came to Christ. "But" is marking his experience on the road to Damascus when he first saw Jesus in His glory and learned what God's righteousness was really like. Christ alone satisfies anyone who trusts in Him. And Paul happily considered all his human achievement as loss in order to gain Christ's divine accomplishment. Paul made a decision in the past to forsake all for Christ." Hating one's own family means hating the physical, the carnal relationship that should not be hindrance for the ministry. We must not have anything that you put before Jesus. You chose to lose for the one you love. If there is someone or something that is standing between you and the Lord, remove it. Forsake all means all! Therefore, you'd better be willing to give up any and everything for our Lord.

Servanthood is the condition of being a servant. All our actions should reflect the fact that Jesus is master of our lives. We are to be His servant. The term servant carries the idea of humble nobility. Being God's servant is an honorable position. The word bondservant is applied to someone absolutely devoted to Jesus. Paul, Timothy, James, Peter, and Jude all describe themselves as bondservants of Christ. Servanthood is to be faithful, blameless and upright, fear God and shun evil. God found all these in Job and that was what made him eligible to be called a servant by God. (Job 2:3) In the kingdom of God; it is always about servanthood and service. Salvation signifies that we are now servants of the living God.

Let's examine our hearts...are you a servant? 1. Do you make yourself available to serve? – much like a soldier, a servant must always be standing by for duty. Are you available to God anytime? 2. Do you pay attention to needs? Are you on the lookout for ways to help others? So let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith. 3. Do you do the best with what you have? Don't make excuses or wait for when the time is right. One reason you may not serve is because you fear you are not good enough. 4. Do you do every task with equal dedication? God says to do things with all of our hearts. Look to Jesus as the example: washing feet, serving lepers—nothing was beneath Him. 5. Are you faithful to the ministry God has called you to serve? Are you fulfilling your responsibilities and owes? Are you trustworthy and dependable? 6. Do you maintain a low profile? Servants don't promote themselves. Instead of acting to impress we are to clothe ourselves in humility. Do you serve for approval and applause of others? You serve God by serving others.

Servanthood is how God carries out His work. Jesus told His disciples that they would do greater works than He did. (JOH 14:11-14) As we surrender our lives to the service of the most-high God, He will honor us with true greatness. As we serve Him, He then is freed up to do His will, His great works in and through us. *“and glorify your Father in heaven.”* (MAT 5:16) Servanthood is essential to spiritual growth. If you are serving God in some fashion, you are maturing spiritually. In every church, there are people who have talents, skills, spiritual gifts but never use them for the work of the Lord—and each one of these is a spiritual babe—a baby in Christ. Hebrews 5:12 says of Spiritual immaturity, *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God.* We are not saved merely to be freed from guilt and sin but so that we will serve the Lord. Servanthood is the purpose for spiritual gifts: Every believer has one or more spiritual gifts, which we are to use in serving the body of Christ. Giving ourselves to God is our spiritual act of worship. It's reasonable that we would serve the God who has provided the greatest service of all.

Biblical servanthood is an act of loving service performed in the power of the Holy Spirit to meet spiritual needs of those around us—not looking for our recognition, but rather, leaving the results to God. When we, finally realize that our calling is to serve. If you want to serve God, key is to get to know Him! Serving God comes with an eternal hope of happiness and Joy. Therefore, we must strive to follow Christ to receive the reward of eternal life. When we truly know God, who is love, our natural response is a desire to love and serve Him. Help me Lord to fulfill my calling to be a servant of the Lord.

As followers, we should follow the example of Jesus, who was equal with God but humbled Himself and became a man. *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* In Mat 20:25-28, it occurs after the mother of Zebedee's sons asked Jesus for the favor that one of her sons could sit at His right hand, the other at His left in His kingdom. There is a world system that involves authority to be exercised over others. What does the world define greatness? power, possessions, prestige and position. Jesus called them all together and said, *whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave.* Jesus, measured greatness in terms of service and not status. Bible reminds us that our attitude is to be like Christ's in that we consider others better than ourselves and do nothing out of vanity or selfishness. Most people are concerned about me, myself and I. It's all about self, selfish and it doesn't bring joy, rather it robs us of true joy. If the fundamental obligations of the Christian life are love for God and love for others. (MAT 22:36) How can we demonstrate love for God? Our love for God will be expressed in our love for others. Our virtues are simply expressions of love. Therefore, our mission is to serve one another, to give of ourselves. Pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ. True leadership is servanthood and greatest master of all time is Jesus Christ. Servanthood is an attitude exemplified by Christ. Church must be led by those who have the heart and life of a servant. *so that we may serve the living God!* (HEB 9:14)

I press on toward the goal to win the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (PHI 3:14) It is God who calls us upward, heavenward, by the voice of the Lord Jesus, to be partakers of the heavenly calling. Each of us needs something that will give us purpose and meaning in life. Paul tells us that he too was pressing for something beyond the material, and the short-lived of time. He tells *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.”* (v.10) This is the ultimate prize, to know Christ and to experience Him in both his power and His suffering—to be part of who Christ was. Like Paul, we too can have this prize in our sights. When all around us seems so empty and pointless, we can find meaning in Christ and Him crucified. we can find that high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Paul has used the analogy of a runner who focuses on the spiritual goal ahead of him. This prevents distractions and stumbling for the King calls us and crowns them there. Paul has a clear goal, thoughts and vision are focused. He looks forward to the ultimate reward for his faithful service. This prize of the high calling of God, being in heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ.

A good soldier of Christ

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A servant of the Lord is called a good soldier of Christ. *You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*(2Tim.2:3-5) Those who are not wholly consecrated to the Lord are unfit for the battle. You are not going to win a spiritual battle with your own intellect or with your own strength and effort. You will win it when you submit to God and put on the full armor of God, that God has given you when you come on throne of grace. Whether you are aware of it or not – every day you are in a battle. The enemy has a plan for your life: to steal, kill and destroy. God calls us to “be alert and of sober mind,” watching out for the schemes of the devil who “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour”(1PE5:8) The devil wants to devour our lives, keeping us from the joy of living in a relationship with Jesus. God has a plan; it is ultimately that you may have fellowship with Him and to have eternal life thru His Son Jesus.

In Luke 14:31-33, Jesus gives a parable describing a king's war preparations and compares this to the cost of being his disciple. Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. ...In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. To prepare to go to battle a soldier must make a number of important decisions, he must decide to leave behind his palace, pleasures, comforts and convenience. He must also decide to leave his family to enter the battlefield with fully armed soldier. He has to decide that if necessary, he will die in the battle. Those who turn back are cowards and Lord of host is not pleased. *"No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"*(LUK9:62) If a man decides to forsake all and enter the warfare of the Lord to serve him and his Kingdom. It is warfare on behalf of the church to preserve it from the power of darkness. Satan battles against every servant of God, God's people and against the Church. *"and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."*(MAT16:18) Being entangled with the affairs of this life and being committed to one one's own family and business will hinder progress of a soldier in the service of Lord. A soldier must make a total commitment of his life even unto death, without such dedication one will not be able to do the perfect will, good, well-pleasing of God.

In Mark 10:35-45, when Jesus was asked by the disciples, James and John, if He would promise them specifically that one of them would get to sit on His right hand and the other on His left hand, in His glory, He asked them the all-important question. *"Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And they said unto Him, "We can"*(Mark 10:34-40) Jesus is referring here to His imminent suffering, of the Baptism, that the pouring out of a drink offering is a symbol for the blood Jesus spilled on the cross. Jesus commenting about a baptism that He had not yet accomplished: *"But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"*(Luk12:50) Jesus' sacrifice fulfilled the need of a drink offering, His blood literally pouring out when the soldier pierced His side with a spear.(John 19:3) Suffering is essential part of qualification process for the Glory and other glorious rewards with Christ. There shall be martyrdom for some, and, at the very least, ridicule and rejection for others. In 1Pet.4:1, shows that Baptism of Suffering is one of the sacraments leading to our cleansing and perfection.(PHI 2:17,3:10)

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus mentions eunuchs in the context of whether it is good to marry. He says, *"There are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."* Voluntary eunuchs are those who, in order to better serve the Lord in some capacity, choose to sacrifice married life. God calls some people to remain single. Paul speaks of those who serve the Lord in their unmarried state in 1 Corinthians 7:7—9. Paul states that it is better if a Christian can stay single. The reason is that a married man's attention is “divided” between pleasing the Lord and pleasing his wife; a single man is free to be more focused on the Lord's work. Paul says, *"I wish that all men were [unmarried] as I am. But each man has his own gift from God;* The ability to stay single and serve God is a gift and grace. But married or single, our ultimate goal should be to live in obedience, faithful and devotion to Him.

In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul says, *"I have fought the good fight"* Paul's life and ministry provide for us a powerful example for modeling Christ. We have to accomplish all that the Lord has called us to do. May we fight the good fight, be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill ministry. Never be lacking in zeal, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. In this spiritual warfare, we need to be equipped and we need to have the qualities and the discipline of a soldier of Christ. Therefore we are required to Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.(EPH6:10) Put on the whole armor of God. Submit to God and always draw close to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.(JAM4:7) Not conform to worldly standards. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Be thankful always. Trust God and not lean on your own understanding. Meditate and apply God's word. Apply the blood of Jesus. Let God fight the battle (EXO14:14)

In John 12:26, Jesus told *If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.* Scripture reveals that consecrated servants of God, those who love's sake and serve him faithfully unto death are those who will have honor of standing with Jesus on Heavenly mount Zion when rapture takes place. *These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.*(REV14:1-4) The kingdom of saints known as millennial kingdom were the servants of God will reign with Christ.(REV.20:4) In the kingdom of the Father here His servants will serve God forever.(ICO15:24) *They shall see His face,*(REV22:3,4) In eternity His beloved servants will dwells with the Father in the Holy city, The New Jerusalem.

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.(COL3:22-25) Duties are all summed up in the one word "obedience" but rendered in important respects.

Eye service is designed to please man. Work will be done only so long as the master's eye is on the servant. There must be singleness of heart, that is, simplicity and sincerity of spirit, that will lead to an undivided devotion to work, arising from "the fear of God" They should realize that the eye of the Divine Master is ever upon them. Dishonesty, pretense, deceit, must be far from servants. It must be hearty service. *"And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men."* Servants, in obeying their masters, serve the Lord. They do the will of God from the heart, not murmuringly, but with a truly hearty obedience. God is the one ultimately judging all we do, so all of our service is really for Him. We do not work "for men" or simply earthly goals, but to glorify our heavenly Father and Master. It must be in all things lawful. Servants must consider master's commands and seek to obey them in everything. Serve the Lord with gladness!(PSA100:2)

God desires His kingdom to come on the earth, and he wants to do it through servants of God and His people by simple acts of love and obedience. *Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.*(MAT6:10) To seek God's kingdom coming to earth is to declare our great need for God's presence, provision, love, redemption. Take time in guided prayer to allow God's word and His Spirit to teach you, empower you, and release you into the calling of bringing heaven to earth today. Open your heart and mind to God's will for your life, and allow him to fill you with excitement and joy.

Jesus said *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill"*(MAT5:17) His servants must keep the God's commandments, statutes, laws and teach others to do the same.(1JO2:2-6) It is in this way, true ministers of Christ are to be identified—by their following example He left them.(JOH13:15) But teach others to break God's law will not themselves be in the Kingdom of God.(GEN6:5) When churches stress political morality Christian values, it conflicts with genuine purpose of the church. We should never supersede the commands of scripture, since church means not a political assembly. What in my perspective—denomination or party spirit—is merely a product of political influences in our life and not divine leading? Instead of dividing over politics, pray that church choose to unite around the gospel and Jesus Christ our King. *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?*(1CO3:24) There is a reward for obedience, faithful servants shall receive inheritance, heavenly glory.(COL3:24)

God's servants are appointed by God's Spirit to proclaim God's message.(LUK4:18) "He has anointed me" "He has sent me" It is God's plan that the church, thru the victory of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, can and should succeed. Develop a servant attitude: This is first step in becoming a successful servant. You must say, "My mission on this earth is to serve God. You must realize that God is in charge. You must change your way of thinking from "I centered thinking to "Him" thinking. Your pattern of thinking, speech, behavior should reflect a servant attitude. You must learn to order words carefully, wisely according to the guidance of the Spirit. *Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt.* (COL4:6) You should become like Jesus in attitudes, behavior and Character.(JOH8:1-11) We are partakers of Christ's glory.(1PE5:1)

A Thankful Servant *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.*(Rom.1:8) A faithful servant of the Lord will be sure to take the time to thank God. Paul ensures that he gives thanks to the Provider of all things.(1Th.5:18) Un-thankfulness, did not glorify God and is a hallmark of a heart.

A Prayerful Servant *"For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*(Rom.1:9) Paul served the Lord with intercession prayers. We ought to pray! It dispels fear, imparts strength, power, renews faith, courage, endures affliction. *Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening!*

A Submitted Servant *"in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you* (Rom.1:10) Paul knew that his life was directed by God's power, not by his own will and strength. Everything that we have is because of the providence of God. We must recognize that we have been crucified with Christ.

A Giving Servant *"I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong"* (Rom.1:11) A faithful servant of God will have the desire to serve His people. Church is God's household.(1Tim.3:15) We are members of God's family. Paul wants to give them the benefit of his gifts to strengthen and encourage people's faith in God.

A Humble Servant *"that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith"*(Rom.1:12) A humble servant shows humility of being submissive to God. He will be free from pride, vanity, avoid publicity, praise, silence under false accusations. When we have obeyed command that God has given us, we can say, *We are unworthy servants. We have done our duty.*(LUK17:10) We do not all have the same function in the Body of Christ, we all need each other in service.

A Devoted Servant: There are other characteristics that would attribute to a successful servant of God. A meek servant shows itself in gentleness and tenderness in dealing with others. A forbearing servant is careful not to impose his calling onto others. A faithful servant diligently carries his duties. A steward servant is trustworthy in the mysteries of God and His kingdom and in money matters. A consecrated servant set apart and devoutly, justly and blamelessly witness Jesus everywhere. A loving servant motive for doing the ministry is from a heart of pure love towards God. A good servant living, dying in faith, soberly, righteously trust in God. *And my righteous ones will live by faith.* We see all these displayed in Apostle Paul's characteristics and commitment to serving God sacrificially, that ought to mark of every servant of God.

God bestows His gifts on the church for a certain purpose which is for the sake of equipping the saints and preparing them for the work of ministry with the main goal that they may be able to edify the body of Christ. *And He gave some as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the fullness of Christ.* (Eph.4:11-13) He gives ministers to do what needs to be done in order to bring God's people back to Him in repentance. Ministry is mainly service; and in order for it to be carried out successfully, preparing and equipping servants is main concern of the church. We are the Body of Christ, redeemed from our sins and its consequences by the Blood of the Lamb. Our purpose, the goal of our salvation, is to spread the good news to the rest of humanity.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2CO5:17-20) As we see, each individual who has been reconciled to God through Christ, has been given the ministry of reconciliation. We all have been given the ministry of reaching our sphere of influence with the word of reconciliation. Our family our friends our co-workers our neighbors they all need to see Christ in our lives. As individual members of the Body of Christ, we should each have a working connection with our head, who is Christ. When we are in communion with our Lord, he can direct our paths, speak through us, minister to those around us. Together with other members of the Body, we can work together, helping each other, reaching out gospel to the lost. When we are in communication with our head, working with the other members of our Body, we will grow, mature, strengthen one another in love. (Eph.4:15-16) God gave gifts to men, for the use of the Body of Christ, to help it develop and mature.

Apostle Paul describes the kind of leaders God has provided for His church for it to attain maturity and Christ-likeness, becoming the spotless Bride of Christ. Apostle Paul lists five offices that are referred to as the five-fold ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, so that our churches will be healthy and functioning according to the will and plan of God. *And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.* (1CO12:28) Here adds other kind of functions. Those who speak the Word of God, who preach, teach which is all part of the five-fold ministry. God has set His leaders in place for His church to function, they display humility, Christ-likeness, not desiring a position but wanting to serve Lord.

Apostles Govern: Apostles are chosen by Jesus and had miraculous powers from the Holy Spirit. Apostles when mention is made of their return from the mission of preaching and healing on which Jesus had sent them. An apostle as one called and sent by Christ to have the spiritual authority, character, gifts abilities to reach and establish people in Kingdom truth and order, especially through founding overseeing local churches. They lay the foundation of new local churches and see to it that they come into full maturity. Apostles have the desire to train and raise up church leaders who will come into maturity in the church, to release them, and then move on to plant another church, something that didn't exist before.

Prophets Guide: Prophets who speaks for God by divine inspiration. Prophets reveal God's heart to His people, giving new information and guidance to individuals and the body of Christ, giving revelation, as well as often interpretation, application and timing. In Acts 21, Agabus, prophecy can be rightly interpreted, as Paul was urged not to go to Jerusalem, escaping predictive prophecy of his fate. In this case, we see prophecy as fore-telling. God has established prophets to strengthen, encourage, comfort believers in His church, and we will not be complete if we reject their ministry out of fear.

Evangelists Gather: Evangelists especially a preacher who with great enthusiasm tries to convince people to become Christian. An evangelist typically goes beyond a church building to preach elsewhere. An evangelist carries a great burden for those who are not a part of the kingdom of God yet, and an anointing to preach the gospel to them that comes with great conviction and draws them to the Lord. They will often have signs and wonders following them to confirm their message. The prime example of an evangelist is Philip. In Acts 8 he obeys the Holy Spirit and brings the Ethiopian eunuch to a believing knowledge of Christ. Evangelists create converts, desire is to see people come into the kingdom.

Pastors Guard: The term Pastor derives from a Greek word for "shepherd". Pastors are gifted to lead, guide, and set an example for other Christians. The pastor is the heart of the church. He is a shepherd who deeply cares for his sheep, ready to lie down everything for them. He wants them to be fed, to grow, to be equipped, to develop their giftings and step into the calling of God for them. In the local church they are bridge between the different offices and functions, listening to all sides and restoring calm and order where necessary. The pastor's concern is the well-being of his sheep and his body, bringing training, but correction and protection where necessary. Pastors lead church services and help others worship.

Teachers Ground: Teachers are passionate and inspirational about education, learning and engaging students in learning. Teachers teach and edify the church, imparting divine life and anointing to their listeners who become hungrier for the Word of God, as the teacher illumines Scripture and brings forth truth. Teachers reveal His mind hidden things in the Word. Teachers reveal specifics of the revealed truth. Teachers are to give the sheep a good foundation of word of God.

Conclusion: When the church with all offices in place, we will truly come into full maturity and have the ability to fulfill the commission to make disciples of all nations. This structure allowed the Body of Christ to grow in truth and holiness.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom: that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (COL1:28) Apostle Paul was not content with only converting people to Christ; he also desired maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The Bible reveals the end goal, the final objective for all biblical teaching: *ie. To be perfect in Christ Jesus.* That is spiritually mature and endeavoring to live a life in accordance to God's perfect will. Teaching is the act of instructing and training others. It includes imparting knowledge and demonstrating how to apply that knowledge to personal life and ministry. If we apply God's methods, we can overcome spiritual enemies; the world, flesh and Satan. All those who serve the Lord are to be able to teach others. There are two main objectives of preaching and teaching. We need ministers because they help explain God's word to unbelievers[evangelism], believers[discipleship]

Paul's writing letters to Timothy was to show him how he might become a good minister of Christ Jesus. *If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.* (1Tim4:6) A good minister will teach sound doctrine so that he is able to instruct others, especially when he recognizes that he is living and laboring for the Lord. We are living in the times of great apostasy. In later times when many have departed from the faith and when there are 'deceiving spirits' on every hand many are teaching things taught by demons. A good minister is to be upright in his financial dealings and not accused of pursuing money over the kingdom of God. He must be hospitable. (1Tim 3:2) A good minister is engaged in spiritual warfare, he needs the qualities of a soldier if he is to be victorious. Satan is a powerful foe and he is doing his utmost to disrupt the work of God. To combat the enemy successfully, two weapons are needed - (1) faith, which means a firm, deep trust in God and in what He is doing, (2) a good conscience, that is, a conscience void of offence. (Acts 24:16) A good minister will set an example to others. The first duty of a minister is to display in his own life the truth he believes and teaches by his Christ-like conduct. A good minister will devote himself to study in his private reading and preparation for their work before ever he appears in public. He must be diligent, means that he must take great care of his inner life and above all in prayer and cultivation of a close walk with God! "A good minister will be careful about his relationships with the opposite sex, want of care in this area as many of God's servants have ruined their ministry! A good minister will take care of his body, here Paul concern of Timothy should take care of his body by little wine, not strong drink. A good minister will live and work in the light of the Judgment Seat of Christ. As he lives and serves, he will remember one day he must give an account to his Lord of the way he has lived and he will then receive his reward, or he will suffer loss.

"and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (ROM10:14-15a) Preaching is the act of delivering a discourse[a sermon or systematic examination of a subject] which instructs others in a formal manner. The main mission of Jesus was to preach. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor...to preach deliverance to the captives.* (LUK4:18-19;24) Like teaching, preaching should always be based on God's Word, if you called to preach you must live what you preach, motives must be right. (ROM2:21;1CO9:27;16) *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.* (1TI4:2) With the direction of the Lord, you must determine the type & content of your message. You should: Prepare yourself spiritually. Analyze the audience. Set objectives. Outline the message using the basic structure which includes an introduction, the body of the message, application, and the conclusion. The introduction has five responsibilities: get the audience 's attention, introduce the topic, explain its significance, state purpose and outline the main points. Topical preaching focuses on specific topics such as spiritual fruit, spiritual warfare, spiritual gifts. Select a particular theme on one of these topics and develop it in the sermon. An example of a Topical Sermon: Title: "Hindrances to Prayer" Introduction: Focus on a problem most people have: Unanswered prayer and the question as to why prayers are unanswered. This will gain attention as most everyone has experienced this problem. Body: Discuss the hindrances to prayer identified in God's Word: Wrong motives and requests. (JAM4:2-3) Sin of any kind. (ISA59:1-2) Idols in the heart. (EZE14:1-3) An unforgiving spirit. (MAR11:25), Selfishness: (PRO21:13), Wrong treatment of marriage partner: (IPE3:7) Self-righteousness: (LUK18:10-14) Unbelief: (JAM1:6-7) Not abiding in Christ and His Word: (JOH15:7) Application: I. Explain how unanswered prayer hinders: A. Family life, B. Our personal spiritual development. C. Our ministry. II. Ask the audience to apply these truths individually: A. Which hindrances are blocking my prayers? Conclusion: I. Summarize the hindrances of prayer discussed. II. Call for confession and repentance of those things which have hindered prayer. In textual preaching, a key biblical passage forms the central truth or text of the lesson. The rest of the message is built on this one central truth. (Peter's sermon-ACT2:14-36) In expository preaching focus on a specific subject or particular text or passage of Scripture, a book of the Bible, or a Bible character. It explains in detail all that is taught, verse by verse, and even word by word. (Characteristics of false teachers, Jude1:3-4)

Jesus delegated spiritual power to His followers. (MAR6:7) The demonstration of God's power is to accompany preaching as well as teaching: *As ye also learned of Epaphras, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.* (COL1:7-8;4:12-13,17) A faithful minister are stewards of the mysteries of God. The preacher is called to be a Servant of the Word. The minister is focused on accurately handling the word of truth. Christ must be exalted in all preaching. Epaphras was a true missionary. He exercised a pastoral and a teaching ministry. See that you complete the work and duties of you have received in the Lord!

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.(ACT20:28) God has entrusted pastors/elders with the responsibility to care for his precious sheep that he purchased with the blood of his Son. This is the highest duty, to shepherd God's flock, but thru the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Pastors/elders can properly care for the sheep. The word shepherd is the word which means to pastor. A Pastor can't shepherd the flock if he doesn't shepherd his own soul. A Pastor must have a personal devotional life with Jesus. A Pastor must live a holy life, know God's Word, able to teach His Word and love the church. If Pastors must guard the flock, it stands to reason that the flock has enemies that will harm it. Notice that he must guard all the flock, not just the ones he feels especially close to. There is to be no favoritism, or partiality here. Part of responsibility of a Pastor is to lead the church. As goes the Leaders, so goes the church. In Mark 6, when Jesus saw the people, He said they were like sheep without a shepherd. And He began to teach them. *Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.*(Eph.5:25) Elders imitates "the Good Shepherd" that requires genuine care for the wellbeing of His people.

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ,.. also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers,(1 Peter 5:1-2) Apostle Peter has been addressing the persecuted churches. He knows spiritual warfare and the problems of shepherding a church. The sufferings of Christ to which Peter testifies are the sufferings common to all believers as a result of confessing Christ and living in a Christ-like manner in an unjust and sinful world. He has told them how they are to handle suffering, persecution in a hostile world. When believers are suffering and in times of persecution or trouble, leaders are most needed to keep the flock united, encouraged, rested, and growing. In Acts 20:32 *And now I commit you to God.* God will take care of them. God will empower them. God will enable them to persevere through trials to the end. The Word of God's Grace is the encouragement for Pastors. It brings timely help, and wisdom so that they are kept from falling.

Why does Peter feel the need to exhort the elders and warning the church? Because *"fiery trial that is coming upon them for their testing"*(4:12-13) And explains why this fiery trial is coming on the church. He says (v.17), *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?* This fiery trial is a judgment from God that begins with the house of God, church with the elders. The fiery ordeal that comes as punishing condemnation on unbelievers, hits the church first as fires of purification and refining. It is a fearful to be an elder in the house of God. If the elders lead the church into strength and glory, they will also lead the church into the refiner's fire of God's purifying judgment. So when Peter calls himself in a "fellow elder," it's not that he is laying claim to an exalted title(an apostle!); he's expressing a willingness to suffer in the refiner's fire along with the rest of the elders. *"witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed"* In this situation elders need warning against failures in the eldership and they need hope. A warning against laziness and warning against greed; a warning against pride. The lust for ease, the lust for money, and the lust for power and prestige.

First, a warning against laziness—the lust for leisure, comfort and ease. *"Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God"* He warns them against drifting into a lazy or distracted pattern of ministry that requires to overcome. Don't be inactive and unconcerned. Don't be fearful of doing what you are called to do. Second, Peter warns the elders against greed—the lust for money. *"Shepherd the flock . . . not for dishonest gain.* Do not begin to look on your eldership merely as a means of making a living. Rather, do your ministry with "eagerness" That is, love your work. Find joy in your work. Third, Peter warns the elders against pride—the lust for power and prestige. *"Shepherd the flock nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock* Pride is the failure to realize that without Christ we can do nothing. And so the proud heart starts to feel that it can be self-reliant. And then it starts to act that way and exalt itself and seek the praise of men. Leadership positions of power and authority does not come by appointment, but by servant-hood. Christ, as a servant, is our example, for he gave up all of his rights; everything he had to serve others. You must lead with servant lowliness. When the fiery trial comes, led by example. You walk through it with the sheep. The term Pastor tells us that he must feed and care for all of God's people.

But in this fiery situation elders also need Hope. *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory"*(1Pe.5:4) You shepherd by spiritual leadership. You shepherd by example. You shepherd by a life of service, free from compulsion or greed or abusive domination. He's going to reward all His faithful shepherds in glory. There is a great work to do all-satisfying Chief-Shepherd, our Lord Jesus. A great fiery battle to be fought. In John 21:15-19 Jesus starts out by asking Peter if he loves him. Jesus wanted Peter to understand what does He want from him. He wanted Peter to lead the church, to lead Lord's sheep of feeding, folding, protecting and leading. Possibly Jesus was also reminding Peter of his three denials and that He still loves Peter and trusts him to lead His sheep. He asks him three times; each time Jesus commands Peter to shepherd in terms of Peter's love for Jesus. The first time he says, "Tend My lambs" the emphasis is on providing food for the little lambs. The second thing "Shepherd My sheep" it includes fighting off the wolves and anything from outside that could come in and produce fear, keeping sheep from being irritated with one another. Lastly, shepherding involves bringing them to green pastures and cool water. That is, Shepherd my sheep and Feed my sheep.